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AUTHOR Golub, Lester S.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to develop a rationale and an outline of a curriculum for a secondary school literature course which satisfies the societal need to understand national moral development and the literature which expresses that moral development. "National" is defined as those groups of persons who use the English language to express national or ethnic experiences, beliefs, and values which are not necessarily Anglo-American or Canadian in nature. A sample list of non-Anglo literature written in English would include African, Afro-American, Amerindian, Indian, white ethnic, and Chicano and Caribbean literature. The curriculum should be developed in such a way that the experiences can be handled at an appropriate stage of the student's cognitive development. Although the exact content of the curriculum would vary from region to region, the student objectives of such a program would remain the same: to understand the creative and moral activities of English speaking national and ethnic groups; to experience uses of the English language which do not necessarily follow the traditional notions of standard English; and to participate in a different cultural experience through the use of English language. (TS)

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NATIONAL APPROACHES TO TEACHING LITERATURE AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT

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Lester S. Golub

The Pennsylvania State University

"I have been given this language and intend to use it."

Chinua Achebe

Language is not realized in the abstract; it is realized as the activity of a people. The literature of a language community reflects the creative and moral activity of that community. Creative and moral activity of a language community can be described as its value system, its beliefs, its totems and taboos, its artifacts, and its people's responses to day to day living.

Language, Culture, and Nationalism.

Over the past century, English has become the Lingua Franca, the language of education, government, business and industry, the press and literature for many nations and ethnic groups throughout the world. Chinua Achebe's statement, "I have been given this language and intend to use it," reflects the attitude of national groups and individuals who have lost the language of their grandfathers and who now speak, read, and write English.

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In his disturbing but interesting essay on "The English Language and the Origins of African Nationalism,"[1] Mazuri has attempted to illustrate how the English language, because it was spoken by a people motivated by imperial conduct, caused the national pace setters, who were ruled by the language and the people who spoke English, to start a general movement against imperialism. This movement, Mazuri insists, aroused African pride and paradoxically lead to African nationalism. An extension of this theory would allow it to account for black American pride, American Indian pride, Chicano pride, Puerto Rican pride, and newly aroused white ethnic pride. We can now begin to equate language and literature with national moral development.

With the rebirth of national moral development, with the introduction of the value of a pluralistic and open society, there comes a need to introduce literature written in English which reflects this national moral development, and which explains cultural experiences of non-Anglo groups who now express their culture and value system in the English language.

The purpose of this paper will be to develop a rationale and an outline of the curriculum for a secondary school literature course which satisfies the societal need to understand national moral development and the literature which expresses that moral development. This discussion does not recommend that traditional British and American literature be scratched from the secondary school curriculum. Nor should this addition

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[1]Ali A. Mazuri, "The English Language and the Origins of African Nationalism," in Varieties of Present-Day English, ed. by R. W. Bailey and J. L. Robinson (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1973), pp. 56-70.

to the secondary school literature program be considered as a modification of the World Literature component, or as an introduction of "comparative" or "international" literature, but indeed, as a study of national moral development expressed in literatures written in English.

The definition of "national" in this type of curriculum takes on a special meaning. The connotative value of "national" deals with groups of persons who use the English language to express national or ethnic experiences, beliefs, and values which are not necessarily Anglo-American or Canadian in nature. The boundaries of this nationalism are not political but rather social, economic, and psychological. An example list of non-Anglo literature written in English would include the following:

1. African literature
2. Afro-American literature
3. Amer-Indian literature
4. Indian literature
5. White ethnic literature
6. Chicano and Carribean literature

The literature of British colonized Canada and Australia have been deliberately left out of this portion of the literature curriculum only because they should appear in a course dealing specifically with the Canadian literature program which tends to reflect the Anglo experience.

National and Ethnic Literatures.

African literature written in English would have a predominant role in this national and ethnic literature course. Fifty years ago, no

African literature was discussed in the schools and universities of the Western world. Where literature about Africa did appear, it created the stereotype of the African as the noble savage. We have only to consider Shakespeare's Othello, Conrad's The Heart of Darkness, and Haggard's King Solomon's Mines. Fortunately, African writers have been able to see Africa in its true social, political, and psychological light.

West African novelists such as Chinua Achebe, Amos Tutuola, Cyprian Ekwensi, and Wole Soyinka treat four thematic areas: (1) orderly tribal African society untouched by Europeans; (2) pure Africa at its point of contact with European customs; (3) defeat of Africa by self-Europeanization of Africans themselves; and (4) acceptance of the ineradicable Europeanization of Africa. Thematic units and activities derived from reading in African literature can open for young people experiences previously unknown to their imaginations. "African Literature in English"[2] is a detailed approach to teaching African literature in the secondary schools.

A survey of Afro-American literature should follow hard on the heels of the African literature study since the experiences encountered in the African national literature written in English will contribute to the understanding of the Afro-American experience. The first period of Afro-American literature extends from 1746 until 1830 and includes four poets, Lucy Terry, Jupiter Hammon, Phillis Wheatly, and George Moses Horton along with prose writers such as Briton Hammon and John Marrant. The second period extends from 1830 - 1895, the age of the abolitionists.

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[2] L. S. Golub, "African Literature in English," Arizona English Bulletin, Vol. 16, No. 3 (April, 1974), pp. 84-91.

The third period extends from 1895 to 1920. The writers of the period include the nonmilitant Booker T. Washington and the militant W. E. B. Du Bois. The fourth period extends from 1920 to 1935 and is called the Harlem Renaissance. The fifth period is the period dominated by Richard Wright and goes from about 1935 to 1957. The final period extends from 1957 to 1972 and is characterized by the writings of the black militants. The two great names of the second period are Fredrick Douglass and William Wells Brown; of the third period, Paul Lawrence Dunbar and the dialect poets, James Edwin Campell and James David Corrothers. The writers of the Harlem Renaissance include Jean Toomer, Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, and Langston Hughes. The fifth period includes Richard Wright, James Baldwin, and Gwendolyn Brooks. The final period includes Don L. Lee, Leroi Jones, Eldridge Cleaver, and Claude Brown. "A Survey Course in Afro-American Literature"[3] has been written specifically for high school students by McClellon Don Cox.

American Indian literature is one which demands that the reader learn to respect other men's visions. Amer-Indian verse has been written, rewritten, and translated for the Anglo-American reader. Most of the traditional Amer-Indian verse was gathered between 1850 and 1940 by field ethnologists who, with a native informant, recorded the narratives and chants as poems. Many of these self-made anthropologist-poets were sent out by the Smithonian Institution in the early 1860's to record the language and culture of the "noble savages" about to be climinated in order to fulfill the white man's "manifest destiny." The natural imagry,

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[3]McClellon Don Cox, "A Survey Course in Afro-American Literature" (unpublished M. Ed. thesis, The Pennsylvania State University, 1972).

the religious, prayerful nature of the verse, and the visionary characteristics are outstanding in Amer-Indian poetry. N. Scott Momaday's House Made of Dawn is a novel of extreme vitality, poetic in its craft and language, but brutal in its subject matter. Abel, a young male Indian returns to civilian life after a few years in the army. In his attempt to adjust to the industrial world, he is never able to dismiss the vision of his closeness to his natural environment, "The river lies in a valley of hills and fields," and as his body is cracked with pain after his ordeal of attempting to become a white man, "He could see the canyon and the mountains and the sky." Sandra Fox has compiled "An Annotated Bibliography of Young People's Books on American Indians"[4] which is available for developing materials for this portion of the curriculum.

Chicano and Carribean literature present a difficult teaching task for the teacher of English because of the fusion of English and Spanish in the literature. The reader of Chicano literature written in English will have to know Spanish. The reader of Carribean literature will need to know the imagry, the superstitions, and the imagination of the islanders. The writings of Wilson Harris exemplify the imagination of the Carribean writer in English. We Are Chicanos[5] is an anthology of Chicano literature collected for high school students.

The new American revolution involves the emergence of the white ethnic. Who is the white ethnic? They are all of those European descendant,

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[4]Sandra Fox, "An Annotated Bibliography of Young People's Books on American Indians," Curriculum Bulletin No. 12. Office of Education Programs, U. S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, Washington, D.C., 1973.

[5]Philip D. Ortego, ed. We Are Chicanos (New York: Washington Square Press, 1973).

whites, who, in their Jungian "racial inheritance" remember a common heritage other than the Anglo-Saxon heritage. They are the French-Canadians, the Polish Catholics, the Italian Catholics, the Scandinavians, the Central Europeans, and the Jews. For every ethnic there was some loss and some gain. The loss was that of the European homeland culture and language; the gain was the Anglo-Saxon heritage. All ethnics are Janus creatures stranded in the mid-Atlantic. Sankowsky's A Glass Rose tells what it is like to grow up a Polish-American in New Jersey. Isaac Bashevis Singer and Philip Roth write about the experience of being a Jew in America. The bulk of ethnic literature is yet to be written and discovered.

Curricular and Pedagogical Considerations.

The reading of national and ethnic literatures for the purpose of examining moral development will present some problems for students and teachers. The major reading concern confronted by students and teachers is that of cognitive dissonance. An Anglo-American or Canadian student will not find it easy to relate to the experiences of the African, the Afro-American, the Amer-Indian, or the Chicano. The experience of the French-Canadian or the ethnic-American will seem distant to the point of even being irrelevant. The teacher will have to introduce pre-reading activities such as role-playing and stereotype inventories in order to pull the readers center of focus into a new field of experience.

The curriculum should be developed in such a way that the experiences can be handled at an appropriate stage of cognitive development of the students. Values expressed and examined by the authors and their characters should be carefully discussed in class activities, and enough background

information in the form of vocabulary and concepts should be presented so that students can make their own judgments.

Students should evaluate the literary considerations of the literature as well as the social and the psychological considerations. Questions can be formulated which will lead to cognitive understanding from the following lists of literary, social, and psychological concepts:

Literary Concepts:

1. Style
2. Language
3. Characterization
4. Form
5. Meaning
6. Symbolism
7. Motivation
8. Nature of characters
9. Facts given
10. Facts implied
11. Ideas
12. Events
13. Places
14. People
15. Processes
16. Feeling and tone
17. Behaviors
18. Absolute standards
19. Ambiguous standards
20. Dogmas

Sociological concepts:

1. Changes in social ordering and events which affect individuals and groups.
2. Social dogmas which affect individuals and groups.
3. Social class structures and mobility within structures.
4. Industrial progress influencing social and cultural change.
5. Ecological conditions influencing social and cultural change.
6. Acceptance or rejection of cultural and value differences.
7. Effect of communications and media on individuals and groups.

8. Social forces leading to acceptable or abnormal behavior.

9. Group transmission of culture and values.

10. Methods of the social scientist.

Psychological concepts:

1. Factors involved in personality development.

2. Varying individual perceptions.

3. The nature and effect of vicarious experiences.

4. Motivations caused by physical and psychological needs.

5. Individual's responsibility towards others.

6. Creative imagination as a means of self-expression.

7. The nature and force of emotions.

8. Responsibility of choices, acts, and impulses.

9. Individual transmission of emotions and reason.

10. Methods of the psychologists.

Louise Rosenblatt[6] has pioneered work in these conceptual insights into literature.

Development and Evaluation of a National Literature Curriculum.

Literacy development is the primary national educational concern of the United States and Canada. Blom and Wiberg[7] have shown that reading content and attitudes toward content do differ from culture to culture. It seems reasonable to infer that such differences may have important repercussions in the reading experience of literature, particularly at

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[6]Louise Rosenblatt, Literature as Exploration (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1938).

[7]Gaston E. Blom and J. Lawrence Wiberg, "Attitude Contents in Reading Primers," in Comparative Reading, ed. by John Downing (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1973), pp. 85-104.

the secondary level. The national literature and moral development course described here stems from a national need in both the United States and Canada for closing the cultural distance between national and ethnic sub-cultures in these vast countries; a need which begs for understanding between these national sub-cultures. Although the exact content of the curriculum of this national literature and moral development program will vary from region to region within the United States or Canada, the enabling student objectives of such a program remain in tact:

(a) To understand the creative and moral activities of English speaking national and ethnic groups.

(b) To experience uses of the English language which do not necessarily follow "received" notions of standard English.

(c) To participate in a different cultural experience through the uses of the English language.

In such a specialized literature program, the student goals for any literature curriculum should remain in focus:

1. To distinguish and describe features of the various literary genre which appear in both the printed media and the audio-visual media.

2. To bring contextual information such as biographical, literary, cultural, social, political, and intellectual history to the explication of a literary text.

3. To apply literary theory such as literary terms and critical systems to the interpretation of a literary text.

4. To extract cultural information and folklore from a literary text.

The formative and summative evaluation of this national literature and moral development program must include a method of determining the extent to which students can apply, respond to, and participate in the

particular literature selected for the program. In short, how well students have achieved both the specific enabling goals of the national literature and moral development program and the general content goals established for the study of literature. Purves has developed an interesting record keeping matrix called a "Table of Specifications for Content and Behavior in Literature"[8] for the evaluation of the general goals of a literature program. Gathering the data to evaluate student attainment of specific and general goals is a difficult concern for curriculum development. In "A Development Cycle for a Competency Based English Curriculum, Grades K-12,"[9] the author has outlined a method for developing criterion-referenced evaluation materials so that content and behavior can be appraised and individualized student progress can be managed as the student moves through the learning activities of a national literature and moral development curriculum.

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[8]Alan C. Purves, "Evaluation of Learning in Literature," in Handbook on Formative and Summative Evaluation of Student Learning, ed. by B. S. Bloom, J. T. Hastings and G. F. Madaus (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1971), pp. 700-701.

[9]L. S. Golub, "A Development Cycle for a Competency Based English Curriculum, K-12" (a paper presented at the Conference on English Education, Cleveland, Ohio, March 29, 1974), in press English Record.